

## Wrestling Association Moving Forward with Facility Plans

Township board of education "straw poll" moves plan forward.

By [John Patten](#) | [Email the author](#) | April 13, 2011



A center for recreation wrestling programs proposed for Warren Township School District property took a step forward with the Board of Education endorsing the outlines of the plan, pending agreement on terms for a lease.

The Watchung Hills Wrestling Association had proposed using about 1 acre of land owned by the district next to the transportation and grounds maintenance buildings on Mountain Avenue, just east of Stirling Road last month. The association would pay for the construction and maintenance of the building, which would house its programs currently using gym space at the middle school.

While initially receptive to the plan in March, board members expressed concerns about whether or not utilities were available at the site, and terms of the lease. Association President Marc Hayward and member Matt Saum returned to the board Monday to report that sewer, water and other utility connections are available, and offered a first-draft lease for the board to review.

"We also went to a lawyer who offered us services for our non-profit organization; we sat down with a similar lease to what Pop Warner has with the town," Hayward said. "It's not verbatim, but the concept is there of trying to exempt the board of education for responsibility similar to what they had to do because that was a concern that was raised."

Board members had remaining concerns about the lease provisions, but determined their issues could most easily and quickly be resolved by having the attorneys for both groups discuss lease terms directly.

Then, the board members gave a unanimous "straw poll" endorsement of the plan to enable the association to move forward with the project.

The next step may be at the Township Committee, which will need to OK the use of the land by the association. According to board Business Administrator Peter Daquila, the land is deed restricted to educational use under provisions set by the township when it gave the land to the district. He said it doesn't appear to be an issue, however, but will require the township approval.

